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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to draw attention to a number of syntactic phenomena in modern English, specifically but not exclusively in British English, that can be characterized as urban/suburban near-standard usage. These phenomena are representative of a type of feature that has to date received relatively little attention from linguists. One such group of phenomena consists of features current among lower-middle-class, and, more especially, working-class speakers in towns. These include the non-restrictive use of "that"; the extended present perfective; extended simple past; development of a new aspect/tense/mood-signifying periphrastic form of verbs; and lexical comparatives and related matter. (VWL)

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Some Neglected Syntactic Phenomena in Near-Standard English

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to draw attention to a number of syntactic phenomena in modern English (more specifically, but not exclusively, in varieties of modern British English, of the sort that might be roughly characterized as urban/suburban near-standard usage). These phenomena are representative of a type of feature which has to date received relatively little attention from linguists. Broadly speaking, three kinds of syntactic (and morphological) phenomenon seem to have attracted extensive discussion and study in recent accounts of modern English. Firstly, features of the standard variety, or rather of the several standard varieties, such as are analysed at length in reference grammars such as Quirk et al. (1972) - these works make only occasional references to phenomena 'on the fringe' of the standard variety or varieties in question, and, typically, none at all to features considered definitely 'non-standard'. Secondly, features of traditional 'broad' dialect speech, speakers of which are in general highly immobile socially and geographically, lacking in formal educational experience, and aged, and as a result largely isolated from mainstream developments in syntax as at other levels of their usage (studies of traditional dialect grammar, which were more common earlier in this century than at present, tend in fact to concentrate on morphology rather than syntax, but the point is made). And thirdly, features of 'new' varieties of English such as those used by (originally) immigrant communities in the U.K. (e.g. British Black English, see for instance Sutcliffe (1982)), those typical of urban Blacks and other ethnic minority communities in the U.S.A. (this goes back to Labov and earlier), creoles and near-creole varieties current in various parts of the Caribbean and elsewhere, and second-language varieties such as the English of Singapore and Malaysia (see for instance Tongue (1979), and some of the papers in Noss ed. (1983)).

Now there are many phenomena which do not fall into any of these three general categories, but which are nevertheless of very considerable interest both dialectologically and in sociolinguistic terms. One such group of phenomena consists of features current amongst lower-middle-class and more especially working-class speakers in towns (I shall restrict my comments here to features found in Britain (amongst other places), but there must be many such features in the speech of town-dwellers in other English-speaking areas). The speech of town-dwellers

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is mostly much more easily mutually intelligible with standard English-with-R.P./General American/ etc. than is that of rural dialect speakers or speakers of Black English and other such 'new' varieties, but it still differs from the relevant standards, statistically rather than categorically in some cases, in many interesting ways. Speakers of this sort are, of course, the kind whose speech urban sociolinguistic studies of the type pioneered by Labov have been designed to survey, but to date much more attention has been paid to the phonological patterns which emerge from these studies than to syntactic features, and our ignorance of the syntactic patterns within the usage of this large and important group of speakers is still profound.

Of course, there has been some attention paid to phenomena of this sort. Cheshire (1982) and the associated articles stemming from Cheshire (1979) contain a detailed sociolinguistic examination of several syntactic (and morphological) features of the speech of working-class teenagers in one particular British town, Reading. There are comments, often rather skimpy, on syntactic matters in most of the other well-known British sociolinguistic studies, such as Heath (1980), Knowles (1974), Petyt (1988), etc. North of the Border, where urban speech is perhaps more distinct, in general, from standard English, than in England, and where a distinctive standard variety also exists, there has been more extensive work of this sort, with more use of quantification (e.g. Miller & Brown (1982) and the earlier work cited therein). In so far as Scots, and, to a lesser extent, Welsh usage can be regarded as standard, they are also discussed, in rather general terms, in works such as Trudgill & Hannah (1982). Some very general remarks appear passim in Trudgill ed. (1984). And some attention has also been paid, indirectly, to this relatively neglected sort of usage , in studies, such as that reported in Trudgill (1983:8ff), of the ability of speakers of other varieties to interpret forms illustrating various geographically restricted phenomena. Nevertheless, this remains an area which cries out for more attention. Just how widespread, geographically and socially, are various non-standard syntactic constructions typical of near-standard urban or suburban speech? How far are they understood outside the circles/ areas where they are current? Where have they arisen from, and how? What does the synchronic and diachronic evidence suggest will be their fate in the decades to come? New studies, in various parts of the country and with various types of speaker, are needed if we are to answer such questions. What has happened to date has been limited largely to anecdotal observations.

Of course, it is not easy to study syntactic phenomena, particularly features considered to be non-standard. It is hard to elicit direct comments from naive informants, as they may not perceive the focus of the enquiry, and even if they do their responses are likely to be heavily influenced by folk-linguistic ideas about 'correctness', or to be too vague to be helpful. If one seeks to study constructions as they actually appear in usage, one must face the problem of collecting

sufficient data to obtain statistically significant numbers of tokens of each relevant construction, which often involves the necessity of recording enormous amounts of talk. And the frequency levels one then obtains for non-standard variants of these constructions may still be very low, owing to the high level of stigmatisation of non-standard syntax, and, in particular, morphology, in English-speaking communities. Speakers whose usage is, in more familiar settings, extremely non-standard may in an interview shift to a much more standard pattern of usage - the effect here is more prominent than on phonological variables. Further, it is more or less impossible to include non-phonological variables in linguistic exercises such as reading passages. Nevertheless, it is possible to obtain some data of the kind required, and below I discuss a number of phenomena which occur in near-standard British speech and which seem worthy of attention.

(a) Non-restictive 'that'

The use of *that* as a relative pronoun in non-restrictive relative clauses. This is not apparently reported in traditional dialect studies, and appears to be an innovatory phenomenon, but is, as it seems, very widespread, being reported from various parts of the U.K. On this phenomenon as it applies in the U.K., see Newbrook fc; on Singapore, see Newbrook et al. 1987; on Hong Kong, see Newbrook 1988.

(b) Extended present perfective

The increasing use of the 'present perfective' form of verbs with a past-time adverbial (not including *before*, *already* etc. which involve implicit reference to current relevance and with which the usage is long established). This has been anecdotally referred to a number of times in the literature, notably in Hughes & Trudgill (1979:9) and Trudgill ed. (1978:13). In both cases, 1) below is cited as a typical example.

1) and Roberts has played for us last season

(said without any kind of pause after *us*). At an earlier date, this sort of construction would not have been heard - a simple past form *played* would have been used, or else the notion of current relevance expressed in one sentence and the time of the event referred to in another. Further instances are not hard to find. In a study of the English of West Wirral, in Merseyside/Cheshire, conducted in 1980 (see Newbrook 1982, 1986), I recorded:

2) we've done our V.A.T. return last weekend

(standard *we did*), and I myself once remarked, during a tutorial:

3) we've talked about that two weeks ago

(standard *we talked*). The feeling seems to be that this

particular usage is increasingly widely heard nowadays, more especially with younger speakers. This latter may well be true - older colleagues (I was born in 1956) report that they would not use the form - but the important point, as Trudgill says, is that virtually nothing is in fact known about the distribution and origin of the construction. Neither do we know what constraints, if any, there are on this use of the form, or whether any such constraints which may exist are involved in any kind of implicational process by which it is being introduced.[1]

(c) Extended simple past

The reverse of this phenomenon - the use of the simple past form where standard English would have the 'present perfective' particualrly (but not exclusively) in conjunction with adverbials such as *just* which suggest the recent completion and hence current relevance) of an action. Examples from the West Wirral study are:

4) (we won't be going again soon,) seeing we just went

(*seeing* here is a non-standard/colloquial connective corresponding with standard English *as, since*, etc. - it appears also as *seeing as (how/though), seen (as (how/though))*, with the same meaning)

5) we just had them (sc. examinations)

6) I never heard of it

(standard equivalents would be *...we've just been, we've just had them, I've never heard of it).*

These (and other more marginal cases), recorded in West Wirral, were all produced by younger speakers, and my locally acquired intuitions are that this pattern is general in the area. I also feel that the usage is more common in the North of England than in the South, and perhaps more common in the North-West than, say, in Yorkshire, but these intuitions may well prove to be seriously wrong. Similar usage is common in North America, and the greater exposure of younger British people to spoken material originating there might perhaps account for the relatively recent rise of the form - but in that case regionalised distribution within Southern Britain, if genuine, would be hard to account for.

(d) 'Had've' etc.

The development of a new aspect/tense/mood-signifying periphrastic form of verbs, in *'d've* (or, under emphasis, *had've*, perhaps for some speakers only) plus non-finite *-ed* form. An example of this, produced by a colleague, is:

7) it would've hurt you if it had've fallen

Obviously, if 7), with emphasis on *had*, is found in any speaker's repertoire, it is likely that 8), lacking such emphasis, will be also:

8) it would've hurt you if it'd've fallen

but there seem to be some speakers who can produce 8) but not 7), or who accept 8) but not 7). For some speakers this form seems to be a variant on the more usual form used in the protases of conditionals of the kind conventionally described as 'remote past', which is formally identical with the ordinary past perfective form, e.g.:

9) it would've hurt you if it had/'d fallen

On this interpretation, whatever component of grammatical meaning is marked by the use of *had/'d* in 9) is redundantly marked again in 7) and 8) by the use of *'ve*. In this case (and perhaps regardless of interpretation), the historical origin of the construction seems fairly obvious. The apodoses of remote past conditionals, e.g. the first clause in 7) - 9), often contain verbs formed with *would have/would've/'d've* (*'d* is reduced *would* - see below on this use of *have/'ve*). A tendency has clearly developed of 'copying' this form analogically in the protases of such constructions, perhaps in order to increase the effect of parallelism between the remote condition and its equally unfulfilled result - one sees such forms as *if he would have done that,...* in some rather self-conscious formal writing, attesting to this tendency [2]. Such forms do sometimes occur in speech also. But the reduced form *'d 've* (or even, occasionally, *'d have*, especially after a vowel) is obviously preferred, in rapid speech, to *would have/ would've*, in apodoses of the relevant type; and it is thus this, rather than the fuller forms *would have/ would've* that is usually 'copied' into the protasis. Use of the reduced forms also makes it less clear that non-standard *would* is occurring here, and this may be, for some speakers who are uncertain as to the 'correct' usage, an additional reason for preferring them. But the use of reduced forms gives rise to a problem. *'d've* may sometimes have to be re-expanded for purposes of emphasis. *'d* is ambiguous in this respect between *would* and *had* (cf. 9) above), with *had* being overall the more common re-expansion. In this particular construction, re-expansion of the *'d* in the protasis to *had* is especially likely, because of the parallel with the standard form, in which *had/'d* does occur (as in 9)). A new 'modal' *had* has thus been analogically created (it is clearly different in distribution and meaning from the existing model *had* in *had to*, past of *have/has to* as in *she has to do it*).

Trudgill & Hannah (1982:47) point out that the fuller forms of these protases, with *would have*, are common in North American usage - and one feels sure that these forms are in general more widespread than it might at first seem [3].

In addition to those speakers for whom forms such as 7) and 8) are synonymous variants on 9), there appear, however, to

be other speakers for whom this apparently new construction contrasts in meaning with all standard English conditional constructions, including those such as 9) (i.e. for whom 7) and 8) contrasts in meaning even with 9)). The colleague who produced 7) seems to be in this latter category of speaker. To see how this can be the case, we must first examine a strategy which is employed at various points in the English verb system in order to render past in sense a form which is already formally marked as past and so cannot be marked as past again in the normal way. The most obvious instance of this arises with the modals *could, would, should* and *might*. As most readers will be aware, these four forms pattern in some of their uses as the respective past tenses of *can, will, shall* and *may,* but in other uses they have independent meanings and do not have any kind of past time reference. Nevertheless, they continue, of course, to carry formal past tense marking (*-d* or *-t*), and, like *ought (to)* and *must*, which in fact behave similarly in respect of the present phenomenon, they cannot be marked again as past by the addition of a suffix, even in thier independent uses. An instance of these independent uses is provided by :

10) we should tell the police

which has present time reference and is in no sense functioning as the past tense equivalent of:

11) we shall tell the police

A problem arises, of course, if we do wish to use *should* (or any of the other modals involved in this issue) with past time reference, but still with its inherent meaning (*not* as the past of *shall*, etc.[4]) ; i.e. how do we produce the past tense equivalent of 10) and sentences like it? *should* is already formally marked as past, and there is no form **shoulded*. The device actually used is the creation of a 'pseudo-perfective' form which in fact is not (necessarily) perfective in meaning at all, but is simply the way in which these four modals, together with *ought (to)* and *must*, form their past tenses, being unable to do this in the usual way. The nearest past tense equivalent of 10) which uses *should* is thus:

12) we should have told the police

Admittedly, 12) inevitably carries an implication to the effect that 'we' did not in fact tell the police, and it is this which prevents 12) from being an exact past of 10) - however, I would argue that, as this is a function of the tense/time difference, 12)can for our purposes be treated as the past of 10). Evidence that this is simple past and not 'past perfective'/'past-in-past' may be found in the fact that sentences such as 12) take past time adverbials much more readily than do sentences such as 13) where the aspect is genuinely perfective (see b) above on this issue):

13) we have/had told the police

In particular, 12) can take an adverbial such as *last week*, just like any other sentence whose tense is simple past - but 13) cannot, or cannot so readily [5].

The protases of remote past conditionals provide another situation where *have* must be used in this 'pseudo-perfective' way to render past in meaning a form which, formally speaking, is already marked, misleadingly, as past. In 9), although the verb is formally past perfective, the time reference is simply past - the element *had/'d*, which appears, formally, to mark perfective aspect, in fact marks the form as past tense, and the *-d* of *had/'d*, which appears to mark past tense, in fact marks the condition as remote. This occurs because the same form is used in English for fulfilled past events and remote (present) events - the 'simple past', e.g. *fell*. As a result, if one wishes to express the fact that a condition is both remote and past, it is necessary to mark it a second time as past a form which is already formally past. Compare 9) with 14) to 16):

14) it'll hurt you/ it hurts you if it falls (present/ future, non-remote)

15) it'd hurt you if it fell (present/future, remote (unlikely))

16) it hurt you if it fell (past, non-remote (fulfilled) habitual, etc.))

(In connection with the above examples, it should be noted that the notion of 'remote', as applied to present/future tense verbs, must, of course, be interpreted in a different way from that required for past tense verbs ('(relatively) unlikely', etc., as opposed to 'counterfactual'/ 'unfulfilled', etc.) This difference seems to me to be in large part a function of the tense difference, and I am here accepting the traditional term 'remote' to cover both types of case. These corresoponding present and past forms do seem to form a column in a matrix of verb-forms, opposed to equivalent 'non-remote' forms; furthermore, the semantic aspects of these oppositions seem to me to be sufficiently of a type to warrant the use of an umbrella term such as 'remote'.)

The protasis of 15) contains *fell* - already past in form but present/future in meaning, and past in form because it is also marked as remote. 15) and 16), with identical protases, are related to 14) on different dimensions. 9) is the combination of 15) and 16) - simultaneously past and remote. Like *should* in 12), it takes *have* (here *had*), not to become perfective, but to become past (cf 15).

It is, however, quite possible to produce a genuinely perfective equivalent of a sentence such as 16) (I ignore here present perfective forms, as they are not involved in this present issue). The resulting form here would be:

17) it had hurt you, if it had fallen

Sentences of this type are rare, and more plausible ones contain *must* or a parenthetical adverbial of surmise such as *then* in the apodosis. A more likely re-casting of 17) is:

18) it *must* have hurt you (,then), if it (really) had (indeed) fallen (already)

The falling, and perhaps the hurting too, is here envisaged as occurring prior to the past-time reference point, and the idea is that if this falling had actually occurred, as, perhaps, is claimed elsewhere, the hurting too must have occurred. Now the protasis of a sentence like 17) is identical with the (full-stress form of the) protasis of a sentence like 9). (It seems to me that *'d* cannot occur for *had* in 17) since some stress must always be on this item in sentences of this type.) But 9) and 17) are related to 16) on different dimensions, as above in the case of 15), 16) and 14). 9) is the remote form of 16), whilst 17) is the (non-remote) perfective form of 16). That 17) and 9) are indeed quite distinct, as far as their protases are concerned, is confirmed by three considerations. Firstly, as remarked, it seems that *'d* can occur only in 9), not in 17). Secondly, the form of the verb in the apodosis is always different (unless we count archaic *must have hurt* in the sense of 'would surely have hurt', which at one time was heard in sentences such as 9)). Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, there are alternative forms of the protases of 9) and similar sentences (and of 15 and similar sentences) which are not available in the cases of 17) (or 14) or 16)) - i.e. only the remote forms have these alternatives. The most usual alternative form of 9) involves inversion of the subject and the word *had* (here, of course, never *'d*, since it becomes clause-initial). E.g.:

19) had it fallen, it would've/'d've hurt you

(more usual order). There are further alternatives, with *should it have fallen*, *were it to have fallen*, etc. Equivalents of these exist for 15) (where there is no *had* in the protasis, ruling out any equivalent of 19)); e.g. *should it fall*, *were it to fall*. Forms of this sort are not found corresponding with 14), 16) or 17) - the non-remote forms. This fact clearly distinguishes 9) from 17), and 15) from 16).

However, it may sometimes be felt necessary to produce a form which differs in meaning from 9) in the same way that 17) differs from 16) - that is, by the addition of perfective aspect. Such a form will differ in meaning from 16) on both dimensions, remote/non-remote and simple/perfective, although sharing with it its past tense. That is to say, it will relate to 9), 17) and 16) in the same way that 9) itself relates to 15), 16) and 14); just as 9) is past and remote, sharing one feature with each of 15) (remote) and 16) (past), both of which are absent in 14), so this new form will be both perfective and remote, sharing the former feature with 17) and the latter with 9), and sharing its past tense with both of these and with 16). But the form of the verb in both 9) and 17) is already marked

formally twice - as remote and past 9) or as past and perfective 17). The option which was available for creating 9), that of marking a second time, is not available here, because the forms are already marked a second time. The form thus has to be marked yet again - it is perhaps not surprising that it appears to be a relatively recent development, particularly with this meaning! There are two principal factors which would both seem to encourage the use of *have* after *had* as the necessary device here. Firstly, *had* is often phonologically identical with *would*, owing to being reduced to *'d*, and *would*, like *should* etc., freely takes *have* in this way (see 12) above). Secondly, forms such as 7) and 8), with *had have*, probably existed already, in the usage of speakers for whom they were/are synonymous with 9). Further encouragement must derive from the frequent presence of *would have* etc. in the apodoses of these constructions, and of *would/'d* in their present/future equivalents. Forms such as 7) and 8) result, marked as perfective twice. Once this (formally past) *had* as in 7) and 8),is identified as a modal, which it probably is both by speakers who treat 7) and 8) as synonymos with 9), and by this second group who do not, the use of *have* to render it past in meaning becomes an obvious tactic - it must seem closely parallel with *could*, *should* etc.

Speakers of this second type, then, interpret such as 7) and 8) as both past perfective and remote - that is 7) and 8) mean, for them, roughly: 'if it had fallen (already), prior to the past-time reference point, which it didn't, it would subsequently (at or before that reference point) have hurt you (but it didn't fall so it didn't hurt you)'. Although this reports a sequence of events which differs scarcely at all, in purely factual temrs, from that reported by 9), it contrasts grammatically with both 9) and 17), and combines their meanings just as 9) combines those of 15) and 16). If speakers of this kind really do make this sort of distinction, it should be difficult or impossible for them to use *'ve* in cases where the perfective element cannot be taken as present - e.g. where the events (or, better, states) described in the two clauses are strictly contemporaneous. This issue has not so far been tested.

At least some speakers of this type, including the colleague referred to, also use alternative forms of 7) and 8) parallel with 19) (alternative of 9)), e.g.:

20) had it've fallen, it would've/d've hurt you

I do not know whether speakers who treat 7) and 8) as synonymous with 9) ever produce forms like this, but they are frequent. I recently heard a BBC cricket commentator, a Yorkshireman, say on the radio:

21) had it've happened,...

This usage confirms, if confirmation were needed, the remote meaning of 7) and 8), as the inversion occurs only with remote forms, and its existence for some speakers serves to integrate

further into the conditional system this new form with its apparently still newer meaning.

I conclude this discussion with a tabulation of the relationships between 7) and 8), 9), 14), 15), 16) and 17).

(i) 14), 15), 16), 9)

14) Present/Future	Non-remote	Unmarked	
15) Present/Future	Remote	Marked past	
16) Past	Non-remote	Marked past	
9) Past	Remote	Marked past and perfective	

(ii) 16), 9), 17), 7) and 8) (second type of speaker)

16) Past	Non-remote	Simple	Marked past
9) Past	Remote	Simple	Marked past and perfective
17) Past	Non-remote	Perfective	Marked past and perfective
7), 8) Past	Remote	Perfective	Marked past, perfective and extra *have* (pseudo-perfective)

Theoretical considerations of this kind are highly interesting, of course, but the fact remains that as far as is known all the evidence for the existence and meaning of forms such as 7) and 8) is anecdotal. The degree to which sentences such as these are used or accepted, in either interpretation, and their geographical and social distribution, remain most unclear [6].

(e) Lexical comparatives and related matter

Phenomena centring upon the words *different* and *than*. (On these see Newbrook & Yio 1987 on background and on the situation in Singapore - this study is very much the fullest available in this area, for any dialect, despite certain methodological and other constraints relating to the fact that it derives from an M.A. dissertation.) The adjective *different* is increasingly frequently intensified by *much* rather than *very*, the normal intensifier used with positive (i.e. formally non-comparative, non-superlative) adjectives in standard English. An example from West Wirral is provided by:

22) it sounds much different than it sounds here

In fact, in this particular study, *much different* was frequent, while no case of *very different* occurred in many hours of conversation. For many speakers in this area, *much different* seems to be categorically found here, and I have never heard anyone 'corrected' for using it. More generally, there is plenty of evidence of the prevalence of the form throughout the U.K. and elsewhere, and it has begun to appear in serious writing, including that of linguists. 23) below appears in Trudgill & Hannah 1982 (27):

23) Welsh English ... is not much different from that of England

Examples in journalistic writing are much more frequent still, and perhaps date from earlier. 24) below formed the headline to a sports article printed in a local Yorkshire newspaper in early 1975:

24) it's a much different Trinity now

('Trinity' refers to the playing squad of Wakefield Trinity Rugby League Football Club). More recently, and from a location which might be expected to be somewhat isolated from developments of this sort, comes:

25) it will not be much different from urban Hongkong

(referring to Shatin in Hong Kong's New Territories - the source was the Straits Times, Singapore's leading English-language newspaper, the date 31/3/83). Other examples can readily be found.

This last example includes the negative *not*, and in the presence of *not*, either immediately before the intensifier or separated from it by a monosyllabic verb form (or other short item), *much* seems to occur at a higher rate of frequency and to be more generally accepted. It is possible that the usage is being introduced implicationally, with this environment leading. One rather obvious reason for this is the fact that *much* in its use as a determinant with non-count nouns is rather formal (one says *a lot of sand* rather than *much sand*), whereas *not much*, the negative equivalent, is not marked as formal at all (*a lot of sand*; *not much sand*; *not a lot* is marked as colloquial). This is particularly relevant here in that one of the most frequent non-count nouns appearing after *much* in this function is *difference*, and it seems clear that the use of *much* with *different* has been at the very least encouraged by the frequency of occurrence of *much* with *difference*, where it is quite standard. It would not be surprising, then, that forms such as *not... much different* should be more common than simply *much different*, in parallel with the relative frequencies of the corresponding expressions involving *difference*. However, it is not in fact known from any empirical work whether or not *much different* really is more frequent after *not* than elsewhere, still less what the origin and explanation of this difference of frequency might be.

It must be pointed out here that *much better* and other constructions including *much* with an ordinary comparative adjective are *not* in any way marked as formal by constrast with, e.g., *not much better*; *a lot better* is relatively informal (like *not a lot*, although perhaps less markedly informal than this), and *much better* is simply the usual 'neutral' form like *not much sand*). Any motivation for a constraint on *much* with *different*, relating to negation, must clearly derive from constructions with *difference* and other nouns, not those with comparative adjectives.

In respect of all this a further point suggests itself: in addition to *not* (etc.), items such as *very* may also precede *much*. Constructions with *very much* vary a great deal in both acceptability and semantic impact, depending on the type of item which follows. With ordinary comparatives the construction is quite standard, but differs in meaning from that without *very*, being 'emphatic' (parallel with colloquial *very very* before positive adjectives). With positive adjectives it is of doubtful standardness and, if standard, often seems to carry a different, non-empathic meaning (i.e. no extra emphasis on top of that provided by *very* or *much* alone) from *very* alone (*much*, of course does not occur alone here) - see the discussion of *very much feudal* in Newbrook & Yio 1987:105f. With *different* (etc.) its status is presumably equivalent to that of *much different* above (non-standard?), and its meaning is presumably emphatic as with ordinary comparatives - but one cannot, perhaps, be sure. Yio found it to be less frequent where a negative was present, and this might seem unsurprising, since *not much* is perhaps seen as a block expression, and since *not very much* (plus adjective) is a rather lengthy phrase to use unless genuine extra emphasis is involved. Newbrook & Chng 1987 also find use of *very much* in Singapore English with *similar* etc., and this is clearly common elsewhere too.

Whatever the role in the origin of the expression itself of established forms much as *much difference*, it seems clear that one major factor must have been/must be the standard and near-univeral use of *much* as the regular intensifier with comparative adjectives such as *better*, *bigger*, *finer* etc. Indeed, *different*, though not comparative in form, can easily come to be regarded as a comparative, because its meaning is inherently comparative - unlike most formally non-comparative adjectives, it always carries with it the idea of comparison between the entity referred to by the noun phrase in which it appears or to which it forms part of a predicate, and some other entity, and it very frequently takes an overt postmodifier in which this second entity is referred to, in standard English typically introduced by *from*. One might, then, refer to *different* as a lexical comparative. It is thus unsurprising that it has begun to behave like a genuine comparative adjective in this way.

Further evidence in support of this explanation comes from a number of related phenomena. Firstly, *far* can also occur, in some varieties, as an intensifier with *different*. An example from West Wirral is:

26) they have a far different accent from ours

(note use of standard *from* here, rather than *than* as in 22) above, on which point see below.) The intensifier *far* more usually occurs with comparative adjectives, e.g. *far bigger*, *far worse*, but **far big*, **far good*. Secondly, *much*, and perhaps *far*, also seem to occur, for many speakers, with some other adjectives which have a comparative element in their meaning, whilst not being formally comparative; e.g. *preferable* (I take

much preferable, at least, to be standard, but it is nevertheless unusual given the overall restriction of *much* to the intensification of genuine comparatives. I myself would say, I think, *much preferable* but probably not *far preferable* and almost certainly neither of the forms with *different*, although many standardised speakers such as my mother use these latter forms almost categorically) [7].

Thirdly, and most significanly, *different* seems to be increasingly often followed by *than* rather than by standard English *from*. There are regional and national preferences here, in which *to* (see below) is also implicated, but there seems little doubt that overall *than* is on the increase, particularly in the U.K. Since comparatives are regularly followed by *than*, which serves to introduce their postmodifiers, these two developments, use of *than* and use of *much*, can be seen as aspects of the general absorption of *different*, in syntactic terms, into the class of comparative adjectives. It will be noted that *than* appears in 22) above. There seems, however, to be no categorical implicational link between the use of *much* and the use of *than*, in either direction - all of 27) to 30) seem to occur:

27) she's very different from me (STANDARD)

28) she's much different from me

29) she's very different than me (PERHAPS THE RAREST)

30) she's much different than me

There are, of course, also forms with *to* , with both *very* and *much*. Any statistical implicational patterns presumably work against the occurence of 29) rather than 28) - it is more likely that there are speakers who can produce only the latter than speakers who have only the former. However, in other syntactic environments, e.g. with clausal postmodifiers, forms equivalent to 29) may very well be preferred to those equivalent to 28). We shall see below why this might be so. Empirical studies, in fact, are needed to sort out just which combinations of usage actually occur, and what detailed patterns of usage exist.

It should be noted that *than* can function as a subordinating conjunction as well as a preposition, and thus can introduce clausal postmodifiers very readily (it does so in standard English after genuine comparatives, as in *bigger than I am*, *better than we can*, etc.). In fact, in traditional grammatical accounts of the sort cited above, it is regarded as being invariably a conjunction, and its prepositional function is not recognized, cases such as *bigger than you* being treated as the product of ellipsis, and the appearance after *than* of object-pronoun forms such as *him*, *us* being seen as non-standard. The fact that *than* is at least sometimes a conjunction enables an entire finite subordinate clause to be used as the postmodifier to *different* by those speakers for whom *different than* is possible. This cannot readily be done

with *from*, as *from* seems to function as a conjunction are somewhat obscure and are regarded as more remote from standard English. The greater flexibility of *than* must serve to encourage further its use after *different*, where clausal postmodifiers are often required, and must otherwise be introduced by a somewhat clumsy periphrasis. 22) above is a clear example of this. Using *from* one would have to re-cast the postmodifier as a noun-phrase with a head such as *way*, with the subordinate clause postmodifying this head rather than following the connective clearly:

31) it sounds much different from the way (that) it sounds here

This is lengthier and more complex. Alternative forms such as 32), where *from* is simply treated as a conjunction, do not occur widely and would probably be stigmatized:

32) it sounds much different from it sounds here

This is the reason why I remarked above that *than* might very well occur, even after *very*, with this sort of postmodifier.

As a result of this use as a conjunction, *than* is variably followed by subject-pronoun forms, traditionally held to be the result of ellipsis (see above). An alternative form of 30) (the same applies to 29), of course) would thus be:

33) she's much different than I

supposedly ellipted from:

34) she's much different than I am

although of course this would not occur after *different* in standard English, since *than* would not occur here itself. One suspects that forms such as 33) are now rather rare, or at any rate are losing ground to forms like 30), and it may well be the case that *than*, like *after* and several other such items, is coming to possess evenly the double identity of preposition (followed by a single noun-phrase) and conjunction (introducing a finite subordinate clause). Subject-pronoun forms, naturally enough, do not seem to occur after *from*, expect in co-ordination as in 35):

35) she's very/much different from Jane and I

However, little is known about actual patterns of usage here.

As well as many cases of *than* after *different* in the West Wirral data, there were also a number of cases of *than* after *differently*, the adverb, or after *different* used as an adverb (non-standardly):

36) you speak differently than them

(note the form of the pronoun).

37) you treated apprentices different than you do now [8]

This whole issue is rendered still more complex by the variable occurrence of *to* after *different*, and also after other lexical comparatives such as *depleted*; and, occasionally, and presumably by extension, after genuine comparatives. Note the following from the West Wirral:

38) they talk different to us

(*different* adverb again)

40) they have been slightly depleted to what they used to be

Note that *to* in 40) is treated as a preposition, that is, in a standard way, although this particular construction is non-standard. The phrase *what they used to be* forms the prepositional complement - with *compared* or *relative* before *to* and *the way (that)* in place of *what*), 40) would be indisputably standard. In the West Wirral data, *to* was almost always used as a preposition rather than as a conjunction, even in constructions such as these; but occasional use of *to* as a conjunction, parallel with putative similar use of *from* as instanced in 32) above, is found, mainly from 'broader' speakers. The only clear-cut case in the West Wirral corpus is:

41) he says all the opposites to I do

Sheer confusion/error/mixed construction may of course play a part here, but I believe that there is in fact a pattern of forms such as 41), although they are certainly not frequent.

The use of *to* after *different* has apparently been extended by some speakers to genuine comparatives, thus further increasing the parallelism between these and *different* itself:

42) an older generation to yourself

(see note 8 for parallel cases with *from*); and *to* also occurs with the noun *difference*, again, presumably, by extension from *different*:

43) the difference to me is considerable

(here the sense was, apparently, 'the difference between X and me', not 'the difference (between X and Y) from my viewpoint/ as far as I can tell". In the latter interpretation, 43) is quite standard and unremarkable).

It appears, however, that *than* itself never appears after *difference* in this way. No case has been brought to my attention, in any event. This perhaps indicates that there is some resistance at this point to the assumption by *than* of full prepositional function - for what reason, grammatical, semantic or other, is unclear.

To return to *to*, this form even occurs, perhaps by further extension from its use in sentences such as 42), after non-comparative adjectives, where there is some idea of comparison:

44) it's very scruffy to what it used to be

(*to* preposition again). In standard English, *compared* or *relative* would again have been required here before *to*.

In addition to the question of *to*, there is still a further major phenomenon associated with *than* to be considered. Perhaps under the influence of these constructions with *to what*, as exemplified in 40) and 44), and in line with the increasingly frequent use of *than* as a preposition with object pronoun forms following (e.g. 29) and 30) above), some speakers seem now to prefer the prepositional interpretation of *than* even where it introduces a finite subordinate clause as the postmodifier of *different* or of a comparative adjective. This leads to the redundant use of *what* after *than* (cf. 40) and 44)), as a dummy noun-phrase head - both with *different* and with genuine comparatives. A typical West Wirral example is:

45) they've got more status than what the working class've got

Whatever the truth about the inspiration for the development of this construction (i.e. is it really based on previously existing forms such as 40) and 44), or are they contemporaneous, later, or only peripherally relevant?), it seems likely that certain parallelism with standard English constructions have at least served to encourage its use. It seems to occur most frequently, and perhaps originally started, with cases such as 45), where there is in fact a noun-phrase in the main clause which parallels the dummy noun-phrase created in the subordinate clause by the use of *what*, both grammatically and semantically. In 45), for instance, the noun-phrase in the main clause is *more status*, which is the object of the clause, and *what* in the subordinate clause refers to such status as the working class is imagined to have and is the object of its own clause. One could replace 45), at greater length and inelegantly, with:

46) they've got more status than the status which/that the working class've got

This could (just) occur in standard English, but would more naturally be reduced to:

47) they've got more status than that which the working class've got

47) still appears very formal, stilted and long-winded. Now in standard English *that which, those which, the thing(s) which* etc., as antecedent and relative pronoun, juxtaposed, can normally be replaced by *what*, and this option is usually taken for the sake of economy and reduced formality - e.g. *I'll bring what I have* rather than *I'll bring that which I have*. However, there is a blockage, in standard English, upon this use of *what*

for *that which*, in this particular construction, unless *what* carries indefinite meaning, as in *what he did was better than what I did*, etc. Forms such as 47), where the reference of *that* is specific rather than indefinite, thus cannot be replaced by forms such as 45). In fact, *that which* itself might just possibly appear after some comparatives (e.g. *a better car than that which I have* seems a shade more likely than *more status than that which they have*); but the normal usage here ,which does not involve a dummy noun-phrase at all, is the obvious solution (*more status than they have*). If, however, some non-standard varieties lack the blockage referred to, forms such as 45) can readily arise in these - or, if they arise otherwise, they can readily be interpreted in this light. Some anecdotal evidence that this might be at least part of the explanation derived from the fact that, in Merseyside generally, forms such as *that what* and in particular *them what* seem to occur frequently after *than* in constructions of this sort, in place of *what* alone. The form *what*, it should be pointed out, is an all-purpose Merseyside relative pronoun, and *them* is, in Merseyside as in many other locations, the non-standard plural of *that*. These forms thus correspond with standard *that which*, *those which*. There is also some reason to believe that *them as*, and perhaps *them as*, and perhaps *that as*, with the Cheshire (and general North Midlands/ rural North) relative pronoun *as*, appear in the same constructions in conservative Cheshire usage, and this might in fact account for the apparent scarcity of *what* after *than* in Cheshire, since *than that/them as* could perhaps less easily be collapsed to *than what* than *than that/them what* could [9].

In any event, even if all this is so, the construction with *than what* now occurs more generally, that is, including cases where there is no noun-phrase in the main clause with the required grammatical function and meaning. West Wirral cases are:

48) they tend to help you more than what these country people do

49) they speak rather slower than what I speak

(*slower* used as adverb). In 48) the object of the verb-phrase *tend to help* in the main clause, *you*, is not parallel either semantically or grammatically with the noun-phrase headed by *what*, which refers to the help and not to its recipient. (The subject, of course, is not parallel either.) In 49) the verb in the main clause, *speak*, is actually intransitive, and there is no suitable noun-phrase at all.

Redundant *what* also occurs, patterning similarly, after *like* (no good case in this data), and, more especially, after *as*:

50) it's not as bad as what I thought, actually

51) ...same as what they're going out on the fishing boats

In these two, and in particular in 51), there is no question of parallelism between *what* and an overt noun-phrase in the main clause. Of course, in cases such as 48) to 51), there is frequently the possibility of an interpretation involving a notional noun-phrase, or of re-castings in which a noun-phrase of the required type does appear, but the point is that in many cases no such noun-phrase actually appears in the sentences as uttered, and that it is this fact which renders the sentences clearly non-standard.

Whether the constructions with *like what* and *as what* pre- or post-date the appearance of forms such as 45), 48) and 49) is uncertain [10].

It may be useful to summarize here the phenomena we have been examining in this section:

(i) *much different* (including relative frequency of *not much different*
(ii) *far different*
(iii) *much/far preferable*, etc.
(iv) *different than*
(v) *different from* + finite subordinate clause
(vi) *than* + object-pronoun form
(vii) *different(ly) than*
(viii) *different to/ differently to*
(ix) *depleted*, etc., + *to*
(x) *to what*
(xi) *to* + finite subordinate clause
(xii) comparative adjectives + *to*
(xiii) *difference to*
(xiv) non-comparative adjectives + *to*
(xv) *than what* (and its possible origins/ patterning)
(xvi) *like what / as what*

CONCLUSION

Once again, we know very little indeed about the distribution and patterning, not to say the origin, of any of these phenomena. Overall, I have been able to present only a little data, and that largely resisting any worthwhile quantification, much of it from one small area in England, and some speculative/theoretical observations. There is obviously a vast amount of existing research which could be carried out on items of this kind. Reasarch of this kind may be eargerly anticipated.

Notes

1. A further example, involving progressive aspect in addition, is: *we've been telling you this on Saturday* (Yorkshire-raised colleague, in her early thirties, 5/10/83). The phenomenon has also begun to appear in serious writing, sometimes (and initially?) in sentences which might in fact be accepted as (marginally?) standard; e.g. in R. Leith's A Social History of English (1983) we find *(this pronunciation) has remained so (sc. in use among the upper class) at least until the 1930s* (p.137); *during 1980, for instance, parents on Mull have agitated for their children to be educated in Gaelic* (p.178). Perhaps this last sentence was written in late 1980 and not revised; it would have been standard then. American instance is *we have heard of Gala ... just the other way* (I. Asimov, Foundation's Edge (1982), Ballantine ed., p.321).

2. Another factor encouraging this 'copying' may well be the frequency in such protases of forms such as *if you could have done that*. This sort of form can easily be replaced by *if you could have done that* - the phonological parallelism of *could* and *would* doubtless assists here. There are also 'request' forms such as *if you would sit here*, etc., which actually involve *would*. (On *could have done*, etc., see subsequent discussion, note 5.)

3. Cheshire (1982:50) also draws attention to the North American use of this construction (with *would have*). She herself found 5 such sentences, in an 18-hour corpus of spontaneous Reading working-class speech (12 tokens of the variable in all), with *would have*; 1 with *'d have* (*?'d've*), the 'neutral' reduced form, and 1 with *had have* (*if I hadn't have gone to the hospital when I did ...*). Further, Petyt (1977:313f.) observed the use of *'d've* in West Yorkshire usage, and suggests that it is derived ultimately from *would have*, as I have suggested above, rather than *had have* (which Cheshire strangely takes to be standard English). Cheshire feels that this is probably true for Reading also.

4. This issue applies only to 'epistemic' sense of these modals, where they express 'modality'. In 'non-epistemic' senses ('modulation'), where the forms *are* serving as the past equivalents of *can*, etc., *have* is not required (e.g. John could do it = 'was able to'), although in some tense/ aspect combinations periphrasis (of other kinds) is required.

5. Forms such as *could have done*, when they themselves appear in protases of the kind referred to (if you could have done that, etc.), are naturally only past and remote in meaning, like *had fallen* in 9). In fact, these forms, when they involve these particular senses of *could*, etc., are always past and remote, or near-remote, in meaning, regardless of the wider construction in which they appear. They are marked as past by the 'perfective' construction and as remote by the use of *could*, etc., rather than *can*, etc. (cf *she can't have done it, she couldn't have done it*).

6. A further example, from the same colleague, delivered

during a lecture, is: *does everyone see what might've been a problem if it had've been a problem?*. In this case, the meaning appears to be that of standard English *if it had been a problem*, rather than this plus any perfective element, though the speaker himself is inclined to disagree. More ambiguous in this snese is an example from a 1976 popular song ('I'm Mandy, Fly Me' by the group 10 C.C.): *if it hadn't've been for Mandy... well, I wouldn't be here at all.* Another example, again from a popular song, is: *perhaps if we'd've talked he'd've seen something in me* (Gerry Rafferty/ The Humblebums, 'Her Father Didn't Like Me Anyway', 1969). Here the meaning can very easily be taken as past, perfect and remote , i.e. the talking is envisaged as predating the 'seeing something', which is taken as the past time reference point. There are many more cases with *had*, *'d* and *would*. See also Petyt 1985:234f on Yorkshire English. I am grateful to Frances White for helping me to appreciate the complexities asociated with such sentences.

7. Various colleagues report that they would probably) use *far different*. An American instance is provided by *it is a far different sun* (I. Asimov, Foundation's Edge (1982), Ballantine ed p.336). These phenomena seem to occur in the English of Singapore and Malaysia also. On 15/12/83 I overheard a local man of 51 (a speaker of Tamil, Malay, English and a little Hokkien) say *you are very much different*. Similarly, a local woman of 24, a 'Straits-born' Chinese speaker of English, Malay and several Chinese varieties, produced *much different* as a complete utterance, in answer to my *things seem a bit different here*, on 23/1/84. From a completely different part of the English-speaking world comes *it's not too much different in Belize*, spoken on 5/2/84 by a 24-year-old Belizean woman, then staying in Singapore. Many other cases, from all over the English-speaking world, could be cited - for some of them and for Singapore usage, see Newbrook & Yio 1987 (as on all phenomena involving comparatives). Since noticing this usage I have been amazed to find how frequent it is; examples can be read in books and newspapers and heard on radio and television almost daily.

8. *different than* is perhaps more common than *different from* or *to*, on which see below) in North American usage; see Trudgill and Hannah 1982:63 on this - they give here, amongst other examples, the interesting sentence *this one is different from/than what I had imagined* (form with *from* standard, or near-standard, British English, form with *than* North American), on which see below, note 10. At least one instance of *different than* also actually occurs in the same work: *both RP and the variety of N(orth) Am(erican) Eng(lish) described here have a different vowel in 'cot' than in 'caught'* (p.33). One of the co-authors of this work is, however, herself American. A more certainly British case occurs in Cheshire (1982:36); *...the forms of the verb DO are dependent on different factors in Reading English than in standard English*. In both of these cases one factor encouraging the use of *than* is usually the difficulty of using *from* to introduce a lengthy/complex component, even if this component is heavily ellipted, as is

the case in these two examples. See above on the general issue of the relative inflexibility of *from* as against *than*. Like *much different* (see above), this usage is now apparently ubiquitous. It must be noted that there are occasional cases of *from* used (hyper-correctly?) with ordinary comparatives, in attempted avoidance of *different plus than*. A 27-year-old Merseyside man recently said *she deserves better treatment from that*, and a written instance, quoted in full on p.158 of Yio 1985, comes from p.1034 of Wisden Cricketer's Almanack 1983 (*much less a money spinner from ...*).

9. Another example quite closely parallel with 45) is *...a fuller description than what has been presented in this paper*, which was written in an academic paper by M.W.J.F Tay and A.F.Gupta Towards a description of Standard Singapore English, Noss ed. 1983, p.188). In fact, this sentence is at least very close indeed to being standard, since *what... paper* can (just) be interpreted as a standard English *what* - clause of the usual type, functioning as a prepositional complement after *than* (though it is not the favoured standard English construction, and *than* is in fact supposed not to function as a preposition in standard English), and with *what* carrying indefinite meaning ('whatever has been presented...','the various things which have been presented...'). One of the co-authors of this passage is in fact an educated Singapore/Malaysian English speaker, highly standard in general usage. Other instances of this construction can also be found in the English of that area. *I can do better than what I am presently doing* appeared in the Straits Times on 2/11/83 (the sentence was part of the officially-circulated questionnaire). Another instance, produced by a young Singaporean adult on 1/11/83, was: *(it goes) faster than what I expected it to.* Neither of these examples involves any noun-phrases of specific rather than indefinite reference and are thus also non-standard. Local speakers of English report that his sort of usage is in fact common in the area.

10. The example cited by Trudgill & Hannah (see note 8 above) illustrates again one environment where *what* fairly readily occurs after *different* in usage that is at least near-standard- namely, after a preposition such as *from*. It is not clear whether *what*, in cases such as this, is 'derived' from *that which* or not - it is also perhaps doubtful whether all British speakers would accept sentences of this type as genuinely standard (see also above). Nevertheless, the usage is, of course, common, and may well encourage further the use of *what* after *than* (and *to*). It cannot, it seems, be the sole motivating factor for these constructions, since *than what* is, of course, also used after genuine comparatives, where *from* (and *from what*) do not occur in standard English, or in any other varieties, as far as I know (but see note 8). However, it is possible that this use of *what* began, historically, with *from what*, after *different*, spread to *than what* (after *different*), and then spread further to *than what* after genuine comparatives. Cheshire found cases of this type in Reading, e.g. *I probably have got...done* (sc. fined, etc.) *more than what he got done* (1982:47) (no suitable noun-phrase);

I talk ever so different to what they do (1982:74) (note: a) *different* present (as an adverb), b) *to* used, c) absence of a suitable phrase). The usage is in fact doubtless widespread. A further example, produced by a Yorkshire-raised soccer manager in a BBC radio interview on 12/11/83, is *I think we had a couple more chances than what Liverpool did* (in the same interview he also produced an instance of *'d've*: *I think it would've been a pity if either side'd've lost it*). On 27/11/83 a second soccer manager, a Londoner, produced *...unless you work as hard as what they do* (no suitable noun-phrase in a similar context.

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